

J. I. Packer's Theology of Discipleship: Towards a Contemporary Evangelical Spirituality¹

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UDK: 27-318:279 Packer J. I.
Original scientific paper
<https://doi.org/10.32862/k.17.2.6>

Abstract

*This paper is an attempt to provide a systematic perspective on J. I. Packer's theology of discipleship based on a descriptive, analytical, and critical methodology of theological investigation. Various references to discipleship in Packer's *Knowing God* (1973, the 2021 edition) were identified, analyzed, and contextualized to demonstrate six features of Christian discipleship (knowledge of Christ, zeal for Christ, spiritual adoption, spiritual realism, biblical anticipation, turning the world upside down) in conjunction with two fundamental aspects (Christ's personal impact and keeping God's commandments, the "two pillars" of discipleship) that constitute its foundation and were extracted from his *Keeping the Ten Commandments* (2008) and *Concise Theology: a Guide to Historical Christian Beliefs* (2011). The article shows how the six theological features of discipleship, and its two pillars are used by Packer to put together a contemporary Christian spirituality.*

Keywords: *discipleship, knowledge, zeal, adoption, realism, anticipation*

1 This article was written as part of the Zagreb Biblical Institute research project: "The Concept of Discipleship Among Evangelical Churches in Croatia."

Introduction

Packer's theology of discipleship is scattered through his writings and this paper is an attempt to offer a systematic perspective on it. References to discipleship in Packer's corpus of writings are numerous, but one book that proved significantly helpful in pointing out various aspects of discipleship is his *Knowing God* (1973, although I used the 2021 edition). In this book, Packer makes some distinct references to discipleship based on which I identified six of its key features. According to Packer, discipleship should be understood as knowledge of Christ, zeal for Christ, spiritual adoption, spiritual realism, biblical anticipation, and – this last aspect is perhaps the most interesting as well as striking – turning our world upside down. Each of these characteristics of discipleship was discussed in some detail, followed by a brief evaluation of what I called “the two pillars” of discipleship: two realities that constitute the foundation of discipleship in Packer's thought, and they are Jesus' personal impact on his disciples and the keeping of God's commandments. These two pillars were found in his *Keeping the Ten Commandments* (2008) and *Concise Theology: a Guide to Historical Christian Beliefs* (2011). It is vital to notice from the beginning that Packer builds his theology of discipleship on the conviction that the Bible is inerrant in all its content, and this firm belief serves not only as a methodology for his theological endeavors but also as a source for his explanations. This is to say that both the Old and the New Testaments are employed to provide relevant texts for Packer's theology of discipleship, which he always directs towards contemporary practical applications in the lives of today's believers as the foundation for a relevant Christian spirituality.

Methodologically, I used a systematic approach that consists of identifying, contextualizing, and analyzing various references to discipleship in Packer's primary sources, specifically in his *Knowing God* (1973/2021), *Keeping the Ten Commandments* (2008) and *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historical Christian Beliefs* (2011); in this respect, I used a descriptive methodology. Then, I interacted with some secondary sources, the most important of which was Timothy George's *J. I. Packer and the Evangelical Future* (2009) – I used this book to explain Packer's perspective on biblical inerrancy. Another book that I found particularly helpful was Ted Rivera's *Reforming Mercy Ministry: A Practical Guide to Loving Your Neighbor* (2014), a source that shows how various facets of Christian discipleship reveal God's character. The last secondary source that shaped my understanding of Packer's theology of discipleship was John Armstrong's *Tear Down These Walls: Following Jesus into Deeper Unity* (2021), a book that emphasizes the need for togetherness in the community of genuine Christian disciples. My interaction with these secondary sources, as well as other books that I found relevant to the subject, is a demonstration of my analytical methodology. In providing my own, personal insights regarding Packer's theology of discipleship, I also used a criti-

cal methodology, especially in putting together Packer's primary sources and the array of secondary sources I used for much-needed clarifications regarding Packer's insights into the practical and spiritual realities of true Christian discipleship.

1. Discipleship as Knowledge of Christ

One of the first aspects that emerge rather saliently in Packer's theology of discipleship has to do with the fact that discipleship is connected with the knowledge of Christ. Thus, it is crucial for any discipleship – no matter how we look at it and from which angle we deal with it – to begin with and be built on knowing Christ. For Packer, there is no way around it: to know Christ is the first condition for genuine discipleship (Packer 2021, 38). Knowing Christ is not just having faith; in this respect, Alister McGrath writes that discipleship is “the quest to go beyond a superficial grasp of our faith, discover its depths and riches, and be refreshed and transformed by them” (McGrath 2019, ix) – a statement which is in line with Packer's perspective on what it means to make disciples.

Thus, Packer emphasizes that discipleship is a relationship; it is something concrete that happens between two persons. It is not something distant and most definitely not something abstract; on the contrary, discipleship is a concrete connection that places two beings in a bond that can be called a relationship. Furthermore, this relationship is – according to Packer – personal, which means that involvement in this liaison is neither optional nor theoretical but mandatory and practical. In other words, whoever does discipleship and whoever receives it are both involved in being together on a regular, if not even daily basis, very much like Jesus himself who spent time with his disciples and he did so every day: “... Knowing Jesus Christ still remains as definite a relation of personal discipleship as it was for the Twelve when he was on earth. The Jesus who walks through the gospel story walks with Christians now, and knowing him involves going with him, now as then” (Packer 2021, 38).

It is important, however, to notice that – contrary to (some) contemporary Evangelical approaches to discipleship which focus on a Christian discipling another Christian, Packer's model is different: it is Jesus who disciplines another Christian, and this is the very foundation of genuine discipleship. Jesus walks with the Christian; he did so when he was incarnate on Earth, as well as after his ascension to this very day. Today, therefore, discipleship is as vividly and emphatically genuine only when we walk with Jesus, following in his footsteps and learning to do what he did. In promoting discipleship as a relationship between Jesus and the Christian, Packer uses the Luke-Acts paradigm which reveals the reality of Jesus' presence with his disciples irrespective of whether he was physically present with them during his earthly ministry or whether he was spiritually present with them after his resurrection and ascension. This is true because genuine discipleship is

not only a close and personal relationship between the Christian and Jesus but also the sort of relationship in which the Christian learns how to listen to Jesus' voice, hear his word, learn from him, and find rest in him (Packer 2021, 38).

One can easily notice that Packer's discipleship is based on a theological method which, as Timothy George demonstrates quite convincingly, is based on biblical inerrancy. Thus, George contends that, in the absence of such a high view of Scripture, Packer's discipleship theology would be invalid. It is biblical inerrancy that confers validity to Packer's Christological view of Christian discipleship as a personal relationship and walk with Christ (George 2009, 58). According to Packer, knowing Christ personally is the first step towards a practical Christian spirituality.

2. Discipleship as Zeal for Christ

Knowing Christ and having a personal relationship with Christ is not a sufficient definition of discipleship for Packer. True discipleship, he argues, must have a certain spiritual standard which is nothing but zeal for Christ. According to Packer, a person who starts knowing Christ and begins a personal relationship with him is a person who responds to God and this response has to be right (Packer 2021, 172). Packer's reasoning is simple: since God is profoundly preoccupied with us, so must we be with him. There has to be a devotion between the believer and God, between the disciple and Christ, but this devotion must be characterized by zeal and spiritual passion. In other words, our dedication to God as disciples must be visible to others as it is constantly informed by our reading of the Bible in its capacity as God's word. As disciples of Christ, our zeal must be total. In this respect, Packer is very clear: a disciple's zeal for Christ must engulf his or her entire life from doing good works and fighting against idolatry of all sorts to being willing to suffer for Christ in prison, like Paul, or even gladly accepting death. In doing so, Paul followed the zeal of Christ himself: "Zeal... is commanded and commended in the scriptures... Paul was a zealous man, single-minded and at full stretch for his Lord. Facing prison and death... And the Lord himself was a supreme example of zeal" (Packer 2021, 174).

Gary Parrett and Steve Kang also notice the critical importance of spiritual zeal in one's religious life, along the lines drawn by Packer. Thus, zeal must be consuming, a mandatory feature of any Christian who acts as a teacher in his or her relationship with another disciple of Christ. Zeal, however, must always be completed by knowledge – the knowledge of Christ, as in Packer's thought – because zeal without such knowledge does more harm than good (Parrett and Kang 2009, 182).

Packer himself is very passionate when he writes about spiritual zeal as a feature of genuine discipleship. Concretely, spiritual zeal must be aimed at "the house

of God and the cause of God” (Packer 2021, 174); it is the sort of characteristic that eats us up, possesses us, and consumes us (Packer 2021, 174). All these aspects of spiritual zeal, however, cannot become real in the life of any genuine disciple in the absence of prayer. Spiritual zeal is what defines the spirituality of true disciples because it is always anchored in the knowledge of Christ and a life of sincere prayer, perceived as a spiritual need. Thus, for a disciple of Christ, prayer is a “flaming” need that lights up his or her zeal for Christ as well as for Christ’s body, the church. A disciple’s relationship with Christ and his church must never be seen as “lukewarm;” on the contrary, it must be anything but apathetic and infused with repentance. Thus, in Packer, discipleship is zeal, coupled with repentance, and a flaming desire to work for the church, simply because working for the church equals working for Christ. But this work for Christ as disciples must also be visible in one’s desire to be always revived by the Lord himself and the constant hope that Christ’s word will reach those who need it (Packer 2021, 174).

For Packer, the reality of spiritual zeal is of paramount importance because it defines the veracity of one’s discipleship to Christ. This is why John Steinreich points out that, as far as Packer is concerned, charismatics should be appreciated for their “positive emotional expressions of faith” (Steinreich 2016, 110) which are nothing but visible proofs of their spiritual zeal. Consequently, displaying a constant zeal for Christ is another feature of practical Christian spirituality.

3. Discipleship as Spiritual Adoption

Packer explains that each Christian should consider himself or herself as adopted; we are all, once we belong to God, adopted children of God. Each Christian, in other words, is not only a disciple; he or she is a disciple who is fully aware of the fact that he or she was adopted by God; this adoption, however, must be seen through the lens of Jesus’ sonship. Since Jesus himself understood his relationship with God the Father in terms of sonship and since we are all, as Christians, bearers of Christ or *christophoroi*, we must also consider ourselves sons of God, like Jesus – but, of course, not ontologically, but rather soteriologically. We were thus saved to be sons of God or children of God and we have this capacity because we belong to God together with Jesus himself. In Packer’s (2021, 209) words: “It is clear that, just as Jesus always thought of himself as Son of God in a unique sense, so he always thought of his followers as children of his heavenly Father, members of the same divine family as himself... As our Maker is our Father, so our Saviour is our brother, when we come into the family of God.”

So the phrase “family of God” is the key to our understanding of ourselves as adopted children of God. Ted Rivera notices that, in Packer, the reality of our spiritual adoption as disciples “is no ancillary matter” because it reveals the very

character of God (Rivera 2014, 71–72), so adoption helps us understand not only who God is but also how he acts in creation.

For Packer, however, acknowledging that adoption is a key aspect of Christian life and discipleship is not sufficient. We must understand not only the fact that we are adopted but also how adoption should work in our daily lives. As disciples of Jesus, we must, once again, compare our lives to those of Jesus and see our adoption through the lens of his relationship with God the Father. Thus, Packer insists that adoption must take control of our lives, very much like Jesus' life was controlled by his profound understanding of his sonship. This is important to Packer because, as disciples, we are not merely part of a new family; we are part of God's family or, as Packer put it, of "the royal family" (Packer 2021, 210) – an evident reference to God's rule over creation. If we really want to know more about us as disciples in our capacity as adopted children into God's family, Packer suggests that we should read the Sermon on the Mount, which he calls "the charter of God's kingdom" (Packer 2021, 210). Having done so, we realize that genuine disciples must understand that, as adopted children of God, their lives must be featured by "Christian obedience" (Packer 2021, 210), an aspect that is fundamental to the lives of all those who want to follow Christ earnestly.

Jason Cherry does not lose sight of this issue in Packer's theology which he deals with pneumatologically. Thus, according to Cherry, it is the Holy Spirit who helps the Christian to see himself or herself as adopted "by empowering obedience" (Cherry 2023, 145). As Christians, therefore, we are disciples who lead a life of obedience as children of God through spiritual adoption. Being aware of our state of adoption, which is demonstrated by constant obedience to Christ, reveals another key aspect of Packer's Christian spirituality.

4. Discipleship as Spiritual Realism

According to Packer, spiritual realism is when a Christian understands not only that God is for him – in the sense that the Christian knows that he benefits from God's favor – but also that people who neither know God nor understand divine facts are against him or her as a disciple of Christ. As Packer puts it, spiritual realism has to do with "countering fear" (Packer 2021, 262); thus, in his capacity as disciple, every Christian must find a way to deal with fear which originates in people's opposing attitudes to Christian beliefs, values, and practices. The example Packer offers in this regard is that of Paul the apostle who was well aware of how people react to divine realities and how this issue affects a Christian's life:

Paul knows that there is always some person, or group of persons, whose ridicule, displeasure, or hostile reaction the Christian feels unable to face. Paul knows that sooner or later this becomes a problem for every Christian, including those who before conversion did not care what anyone said or thought

about them, and he knows how inhibiting and desolating such fear can be (Packer 2021, 262).

So, first and foremost, in their capacity as disciples, Christians must be aware of fear as a result of people's negative attitudes to conversion and godly life in general.

Greg Ogden writes about this aspect in Packer's theology when he points out, based on Romans 8:15-16, that the true disciple of Christ must learn how to deal with fear and how to put it off in the Spirit (Ogden 2019, 102). This is exactly Packer's solution: we must all think with our regenerated minds to realize that God is for us; it is the creator and supporter of the entire universe who defends us and keeps us in his eternal favor. So, Packer proposes an answer to fear, and genuine discipleship must always find a way to fight against such human fears.

To be dealt with efficiently, fear must be acknowledged; as a matter of fact, it is not only fear that Christians must acknowledge but also the opposition that comes with it. Pretending there is neither fear nor opposition is of no avail for Christ's disciples; any serious Christian will have to deal with it because fear is a human as well as a spiritual reality. On the other hand, Packer insists, that not being willing to acknowledge fear and opposition is indeed quite problematic for a Christian who claims to be a disciple of Jesus. In Packer's words: "Opposition is a fact: the Christian who is not conscious of being opposed had better watch himself, for he is in danger. Such unrealism is no requirement of Christian discipleship, but rather a mark of failure in it" (Packer 2021, 262). Christians therefore must find ways to deal with fear and opposition but all these methods must be profoundly anchored in the fundamental conviction that God is, as Packer emphatically shows, our "sovereign protector" (Packer 2021, 260).

L. Gruits-Sheppard confirms this basic truth of Packer's theology, especially from the perspective of God's graceful covenant with us (Gruits-Sheppard 2009) which allows us to liberate ourselves from all fears by giving us strength as we live as Christ's disciples. Living without fear while being spiritually aware of God's sovereign care for us reveals another characteristic of Packer's Christian spirituality.

5. Discipleship as Biblical Anticipation

In Packer, following Christ must be biblical, so discipleship – as a demonstration of our decision to follow Christ – must also be biblical. However, an aspect that Packer finds problematic (not biblically, but in terms of its reception by believers) is a sense of resignation in the face of the problems we come across as Christians. For instance, Packer makes it clear that most Christians find discipleship difficult and almost "repulsive" (Packer 2021, 266) because it seems that no rewards are attached to all the problems we are supposed to go through. History is testimony to the fact that Christians have lost loved ones, properties, their freedom, and

even their lives for their faith, so what is there to expect in this life? To provide an answer, Packer explains that Christians must adequately learn how to think in different terms about reward if they want to be true disciples of Christ. Thus, a genuine disciple will learn to live in anticipation of what he is to be given not in this life, but in the life to come – and this anticipation must always be biblically informed. The reason for such biblical anticipation is our awareness of God’s sovereignty over creation, coupled with his infinite benevolence: “Paul’s assurance that with Christ God will give us ‘all things’ corrects this inference by anticipation, for it proclaims the adequacy of God as our sovereign benefactor, whose way with his servants leaves no ground for any sense of fear or real personal impoverishment at any state” (Packer 2021, 266).

Randy Alcorn echoes Packer’s sense of anticipation by what he calls “the anticipation of unending happiness in the future” (Alcorn 2018, 47), which of course calls for a dramatic and radical change of the believer’s way of thinking, feeling, willing, and acting. And that can happen only when discipleship shifts the focus from the present to the future.

Packer reveals that biblical anticipation is nothing but spiritual realism focused on the age to come when we meet the Lord face to face. Any genuine disciple will have to arm himself or herself with this particular sort of thinking and the way to do so is essentially Christological. It is only in Christ that we can receive all things and it is only in Christ that we can understand, as well as accept, that our reward is to be fully received when this life has passed and we have met the Lord in the eschatological future (Packer 2021, 266). Losing things here is normal for a disciple of Christ; but so is receiving things there, in the future – we just need to learn how to accept this new way of thinking. This is why anticipation, a fully biblical sense of expectation as we patiently wait for the Lord to reward us as his followers, is a mark of genuine discipleship in Packer.

In other words, biblical anticipation means that, as disciples, Christians must learn how to wait; especially how to wait on God’s perfect timing for everything. In fact, Christians have always been expected to wait in anticipation. For instance, Harold Hunter speaks about “the prophetic anticipation of the community reception of the charismatic spirit” (Hunter 2009, 115) and that was a major test for the first believers. But once the Spirit had been given, this expectation of anticipation did not wane. On the contrary, and this is quite clear in Packer, it became a feature of Christian life as we wait on Christ to teach us how “to live” on earth while having and anticipating our “treasure in heaven” (Packer 2021, 268). Such anticipation of future spiritual realities shows that Packer’s Christian spirituality is consistently eschatological.

6. Discipleship as Turning Our World Upside Down

This is undoubtedly one of Packer's most interesting depictions of Christian discipleship. The idea he starts with reveals a rather disturbing reality of contemporary Christians which, in Packer's opinion, can be described in terms of being unsatisfied with our current situation. For instance, Packer writes, as Christians living today, we not only often complain about almost anything that is not up to our expectations, but we also display a sort of disturbing lack of satisfaction and gratitude about our situation and that of other people. To make things worse, Christians flock to enter formal or ordained Christian ministry but prefer the leisure of contemporary plenty. In Packer's words:

...Look at our churches. Observe the shortage of ministers and missionaries, especially men; the luxury goods in Christian homes; the fund-raising problems of Christian societies; the readiness of Christians in all walks of life to grumble about their salaries; the lack of concern for the old and lonely and for anyone outside the circle of "sound believers" (Packer 2021, 269).

One could argue that Packer is quite optimistic about the state of today's believers because many Christians prefer not to care about their own "sound believers," to use Packer's phrase; the lack of gratitude is indeed a major problem for contemporary Christians in the entire range of Western societies. John Fonville explains why we lack gratitude: the simplest explanation is that we do not "know the adoptive love of the Father in the Son through the Spirit" (Fonville 2022, 165), so we do not possess and live out a Trinitarian faith.

What can be done in this respect? Packer has a very simple solution: we must look back in history to see how the early Christians lived their lives in ancient societies. First, Packer suggests, we must rid ourselves of the "safety first" attitude (Packer 2021, 269) which has been affecting our lives for decades. We must develop a perspective on life that is unconventional and dynamic; we should thus leave behind all the things that make us lead inhibited lives suffocated by worries and concerns of all sorts. In other words, we must live in such a way that we should turn our world upside down because this is precisely what the first Christians did. If we choose not to do that, Packer opines that "we appear as no more than halfway Christians" (Packer 2021, 269). We must no longer live in fear; we must move on boldly without concerns about our material, financial, or physical security.

Second, we must become conscious of the need to serve Christ beyond what people expect of us; as Packer puts it, we must learn how to break with "our social conventions" with the specific purpose of following Christ and serving him efficiently (Packer 2021, 269). This brings us to the third step, which in Packer's

opinion, consists of coming to terms with “the cost of following Christ” (Packer 2021, 269). This is to say that we must find new ways to move forward, not hold back when it comes to serving Christ without restraint and fear. Lydia Brownback noticed this aspect of Packer’s theology, so her implied solution is that genuine discipleship should always find joy in the service that we render to Christ and, in doing so, we should learn how not to hesitate in our daily walk (Brownback 2010, 36). In conjunction with Packer’s thoughts, acting courageously in all aspects of life is the only way to turn our world upside down as genuine disciples of Christ. This is the apex of Packer’s Christian spirituality: genuine discipleship means living boldly for Christ in all the circumstances of our earthly existence.

7. Evaluation: the Two Pillars of Discipleship

Packer’s theology of discipleship is based on two pillars. The first is his conviction that discipleship should be based on the “personal impact” (Packer 2011, 114) Jesus had on his disciples. What we must realize today is that Jesus’ personal impact was first and foremost a historical reality that was not only based on his “atonement, resurrection, and forthcoming reign” (Packer 2011, 113) but also anchored in his “messianic role” (Packer 2011, 113). In other words, the historicity of Jesus’ personal impact must characterize discipleship through time in the very same way it did in the first century with the first disciples. Christians of all ages as well as Christians today become disciples of Christ in the same way the first twelve disciples became Christ’s followers: through the influence Jesus exerted on them and through the impact he produced in their lives through who he was as Messiah – and what he did by atoning for their sins, coming back to life for their sake, and promising he would return for their final blessedness. It is not that Jesus did not use various teachings to help them understand who he was and who they were; on the contrary, he did use doctrines but, in Packer’s view, Jesus preferred to work with those who were committed to him due to the way their perceived his impact on them (Packer 2011, 114).

John Armstrong discusses the idea of Christ’s impact in Packer in connection with discipleship which he sees as the believers’ decision “to live the mission of Jesus” (Armstrong 2021, 174). However, this application of Jesus’ work in our daily lives cannot be done unless we understand what Armstrong calls the “togetherness” that exists among genuine disciples (Armstrong 2021, 174). What we must understand as disciples is that we are together in Christ doing the same work for the sake of who Jesus is and what people can become as saved, committed disciples.

The second pillar of Packer’s theology of discipleship is Jesus’ conviction that genuine discipleship is rooted in “keeping his own commandments” (Packer 2008, 38). This has to do with the reality of Christian love which must always

be aimed at God the Father and Jesus as his Son. A true disciple will always love Jesus as well as God in his capacity as Father, but Packer seems to emphasize this aspect to highlight the importance of God's inspired word. For instance, keeping the commandments means that any person who is dedicated to following Jesus as a disciple must focus on what God commands him to do throughout his word in both the Old and the New Testament. Packer himself notices that the Ten Commandments, as part of the Old Testament, are flawless and therefore good for Christian morality. Had they not been so, Jesus would have noticed and would have informed his disciples to act accordingly, namely to avoid them. However, he did not do so; on the contrary, he was emphatic about the need to keep God's commandments and therefore his own commandments. As Packer writes, Jesus sees the Old Testament commandments not only "as having authority forever" but also "as central to true religion" (Packer 2008, 38). This is why he concludes that "commandment-keeping is the only true way to love the Father and the Son" (Packer 2008, 38), thus showing that genuine discipleship is a matter of profound love for Jesus.

This particular connection between discipleship and the Old Testament commandments is noticed by George van Pelt Campbell who writes that, in Packer, the commandments have a pedagogical role. In his own words, in Packer, in their capacity as disciples the new Christians are taught how to "behave through the Ten Commandments" (Van Pelt Campbell 2020, 141). This is a reasonable confirmation that, in Packer, there is no true discipleship without love for Jesus and there is no genuine love for Jesus without keeping his commandments as expressed in the Scriptures of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In so doing, Packer provides not only a solid theology of discipleship but also a consistent Christian spirituality.

Conclusion

Packer's theology of discipleship may not be organized systematically, but it can be discerned from his works and then put together systematically, and this is precisely what this work is all about. Thus, using Packer's *Knowing God* (1973, and especially its 2021 edition), six features of his theology of discipleship were identified. The first is the knowledge of Christ which indicates that there is no real discipleship in the absence of foundational information about who Christ is and what he does. Knowing Christ makes discipleship a personal reality based on what we find about him in the Bible. The zeal for Christ is the second feature of discipleship in Packer, which reveals the need for true disciples to be ardent in their relationship with Christ; prayer is one manifestation of zeal, while repentance is another one, and they both feature prominently in Christian discipleship. The third feature of Packer's theology of discipleship is spiritual adoption and that shows that

we must understand discipleship in terms of sonship: not only Christ's sonship in his relation to God the Father, but also our filiation as children of God. Spiritual realism is the fourth characteristic of discipleship in Packer's theology and this has to do with the necessity to be fully aware of who God is and then who we are; at the same time, as Christians, we must know that our allegiance to Jesus may lead to conflicts and persecution, so overcoming fear is what spiritual realism consists of. The fifth feature of Packer's theology of discipleship is biblical anticipation which teaches us to expect divine rewards in the eschatological future that awaits us as Christians, not necessarily in this world and certainly not in terms of the world. Waiting for God to respond and thus learning how to be happy in Christ are merely two aspects that define biblical anticipation in Jesus' disciples. Turning the world upside down is Packer's sixth, and last, feature of Christian discipleship and this presents us with the constant challenge of living in the world for Christ, and not for the world. To turn the world upside down, genuine disciples must learn not to expect what ordinary people want from life but to put their entire trust in God regardless of how the world treats them.

These six features of Packer's theology of discipleship are anchored in what I call "the two pillars," which are nothing but two theological aspects that provide the foundation for Packer's perspective on Christian discipleship. Having found them in Packer's *Keeping the Ten Commandments* (2008) and *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (2011), these two pillars of discipleship are Jesus' personal impact and commandment-keeping. A genuine disciple of Christ, therefore, will always be fully aware that he exists as a follower of Christ due to the influence exerted on him by Christ's person and work. Then, he must know that this personal impact can only be acknowledged and shown practically by keeping all God's commandments revealed in the Scriptures which, in Packer, are God's inspired and inerrant word. Packer's theology of discipleship deals not only with theoretical issues but also with practical matters. The latter amply demonstrates that what Packer offers by his numerous references to discipleship is nothing but a sound and coherent perspective on Christian spirituality.

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**Teologija učenja J. I. Packera:
Prema suvremenoj evanđeoskoj duhovnosti**

Sažetak

Cilj je ove studije iznijeti sustavan pregled teologije učenja J. I. Packera. Temelji se na deskriptivnoj, analitičkoj i kritičkoj metodologiji teološkog istraživanja, a izdvaja, analizira i kontekstualizira različita promišljanja o učenstvu koja nalazimo u Packerovu djelu *Knowing God* (1973., izdanje iz 2021.). Studija ističe šest odlika kršćanskog učenja (spoznaja Krista, žar za Krista, duhovno posvojenje, duhovni realizam, biblijsko iščekivanje, okretanje svijeta naglavačke) zajedno s dva aspekta (Kristov osobni utjecaj i čuvanje Božjih zapovijedi, „dva stupa“ učenja) koji čine temelj učenja, a koje nalazimo u njegovim djelima *Keeping the Ten Commandments* (2008) i *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historical Christian Beliefs* (2011). Članak pokazuje način na koji je Packer koristio ovih šest teoloških odlika i dva stupa učenja kako bi saznao suvremenu kršćansku duhovnost.